

Franz Schmidt (1818-1853)

A brother of Gio Wiederhold's 2nd great-grandmother was Franz Schmidt.

Although educated and working as a pastor Franz became a Radical Democrat at a time when autocratic rule dominated. As such he became a representative (Abgeordneter) for the Loewenberg. Schlesien (Silesia) district at the first German Parliament, the [Frankfurter Nationalversammlung](#).

Franz was born 2 November 1818 in Niedersalzbrunn, Schlesien (Silesia), the south-east extension of Prussia. He went study theology 1841-1843 at the University of Halle, Sachsen-Anhalt and obtained a position as Pastor back in Schlesien in 1844.



The Napoleonic wars had changed the boundaries and relative importance of European states. The Holy Roman Empire had been replaced by 1815 by the German Union (Deutscher Bund), consisting of nearly 40 states and independent cities. Prussia (blue) and Austria (tan) were the most powerful members. Hessen, itself composed of two parts (light- and dark-brown) and other smaller states were squeezed.

Attitudes had changed as well. The liberty promoted in the French revolution had not brought comfort and happiness to all. Franz became active politically and travelled in May 1848 to represent his district in Frankfurt.

The Frankfurter Nationalversammlung met in the Paulskirche, Frankfurt am Main, just a block from the Römer, the building where the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire used to be elected. Freedom of the Press and farmers were voted on. How to achieve these goals in the diverse states was not clear.

Rulers of many German States were not ready for a representative government, especially Otto von Bismarck, the chancellor of Prussia, then ruled by king Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Revolts ensued and were repressed.



Franz, threatened. fled to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, to the home of a revolutionary leader, Carl Wilhelm Theodor Schuster. In 1850 Franz married Schuster's daughter in Zürich, Switzerland. The couple emigrated to the U.S., first to Milwaukee, and then settling in St.Louis, Missouri, USA. Franz opened a German college (Gymnasium) there.

However, Franz fell ill soon after. To deal with his sickness they sought a better climate and went to Cuba. On 28 March 1854 Franz died in Matanzas, Cuba from neck disease (Halsübel).

The specific information here comes from my father, Johannes Erich Günther Wiederhold (1901-1988). The documentation came with this picture, supposedly Franz Schmidt. But when I checked with some German experts on the event they told me that this is not Franz Schmidt. I am still keeping it.



In 2013 we visited the Paulskirche and found that that the circular hall outside the assembly room now depicted the Nationalversammlung. I looked for Franz, but no names were shown. After some inquiry I learned that the pictures of the participants were imaginary.



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